



युवा नीति संवाद

• YOUTH-LED. POLICY-DRIVEN. NATION-FOCUSED. •

— EVENT REPORT —

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The success of YUWA Niti Sambad (युवा नीति संवाद) would not have been possible without the dedicated support of the entire IIDS family and all those who contributed to the initiative. We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone for making the event a meaningful and successful one.

We are grateful for the opportunity to be part of this important initiative, with special thanks to Dr. Biswash Gauchan for his invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YUWA Niti Sambad was held by the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) as an independent, non-partisan platform designed to foster evidence-based dialogue among youth, policymakers, researchers, and private-sector leaders, with the aim of advancing youth-centric policy reform in Nepal.

The inaugural session brought together a Member of Parliament, industry leaders, a second-generation returnee diaspora voice, and IIDS researchers to examine four interconnected challenges confronting Nepal: economic stagnation, youth outmigration, demographic and gender disparities in political representation, and the persistent gap between policy formulation and implementation.

In the keynote address, "**Next Nepal: Reimagining Growth Under the New Normal**," IIDS Executive Chair Dr. Biswash Gauchan presented Nepal's economic condition as one of structural rather than cyclical stagnation, attributing it to a "Premature Tetrad" of welfarism, financialization, deindustrialization, and depopulation. He proposed Nepalbaad, a development framework grounded in Nepal's own economic conditions and productive capacity rather than imported policy models. The subsequent panel discussion, moderated by Mr. Shreesh Tripathi, extended these themes through perspectives drawn from Parliament, industry, equity research, and second generation NRNA, and health sectors.

FOUR INSIGHTS THAT FRAMED THE ROOM

- Stagnation was identified as structural rather than seasonal. Nepal was described as being in its fourth consecutive year of economic slowdown, with nominal output estimated at approximately 26 percent below its projected trajectory, a gap attributed to a remittance-funded "complacency trap" rather than a temporary shock.
- Political representation was found not to have kept pace with demographic change. Against a national median age of 26, the House of Representatives was noted to have an average age of 35, with only 13 women among its younger members, underscoring a structural gap that the forum was designed to address.
- The effectiveness of policy was framed as a function of delivery rather than intention. Panelists pointed to examples ranging from the 100-day government scorecard to the unfulfilled commitment of a formal apology to the Dalit community, concluding that youth frustration stems primarily from gaps in implementation rather than a rejection of democratic processes.
- Youth were positioned as current policy actors rather than solely future leaders. The participation of parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, researchers, and clinicians under the age of 40 throughout the proceedings was presented as evidence of generational change already under way.



Opening Remarks

Mr. Amesh Pandey

Research Assistant, IIDS

Mr. Amesh Pandey framed the inaugural YUWA Niti Sambad as a platform for turning dialogue into meaningful policy change. The central idea was that dialogue is not simply an exchange of opinions. It begins with listening, asking difficult questions, sharing experiences, and engaging with different perspectives. Meaningful policy change also begins with this process. The initiative was presented as a reflection of IIDS's longstanding commitment to independent, non-partisan, and evidence-based policymaking. Since 1979, IIDS has worked to connect research with policy through engagement with government, academia, civil society, the private sector, and the Nepali diaspora. And this approach has consistently produced results. Even recently, recommendations from the IIDS White Paper 2026 and IIDS' Development Strategy for Vision 2100 (presented to the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance) were reflected in the latest fiscal policy. YUWA Niti Sambad builds on this approach by creating space for a new generation to participate in conversations about Nepal's future.

The remarks also raised questions about whether Nepal's policymaking process is sufficiently open to new voices. Creating opportunities for young people to speak is important, but meaningful participation also requires decision-makers to listen, engage with questions, and remain open to disagreement. An inclusive policy process must allow new ideas and perspectives to shape how policy is made. Nepal's young population was presented as one of the country's greatest strengths. The recent Gen Z movement demonstrated the willingness of young people to question the status quo, but frustration and protest alone cannot build a country. The next step is to turn that energy into innovative ideas, stronger institutions, better systems, and a willingness to do the work required to build them.

Mass migration was highlighted as one of the clearest challenges facing Nepal's young generation, with more than 2,000 people, most of them young, leaving the country each day for study or work. Government, policy, and institutions have an important role in addressing the conditions that contribute to this trend, but Mr. Pandey

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Sambad is not only a dialogue; it is a process for change
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also called on the audience, particularly young people, to reflect on their own role and embrace a sense of shared responsibility and a change in mindset if meaningful change is to take place. Building a Nepal where young people want to stay, return, and contribute cannot be the responsibility of the state alone.

Ultimately, the remarks argued that policy should be judged by its impact rather than by ideology, party affiliation, or branding. The real litmus test of any policy is whether it improves the lives of young people, farmers, entrepreneurs, and ordinary Nepalis. Evidence-based policymaking is therefore a shared responsibility across government, think tanks, academia, the private sector, civil society, and, above all, young people themselves. The concluding message was that Nepal has already experienced its political transformation, and that the next transformation must be a policy and economic one. YUWA Niti Sambad is intended to contribute to that process by creating spaces where young people can question, engage, develop ideas, and help shape better policy. The change begins with dialogue, moves forward through young people, and succeeds through good policy.

Introduction to YUWA Niti Sambad

Ms. Shriju Thapa

Jr. Research Assistant, IIDS



The event included a presentation on the concept of YUWA Niti Sambad, an initiative proposed to create a non-partisan platform for young political leaders in Nepal. The presentation highlighted the need for an inclusive and constructive space where young leaders from different political parties and sectors could engage in evidence-based policy dialogue on issues of national importance.

The presentation began by outlining the background and rationale behind the initiative. Nepal continues to face challenges including low economic growth, rising youth outmigration, weak job creation, and gaps in governance and public service delivery. At the same time, increasing youth engagement, particularly among the Gen Z generation, has brought greater demands for accountability, reform, and better governance. However, existing policy discourse remains fragmented and highly partisan, with limited opportunities for sustained, evidence-based dialogue across political and institutional boundaries. Against this backdrop, YUWA Niti Sambad was proposed as a platform to promote constructive policy discussions among young leaders.

Ms. Thapa identified four key objectives of the initiative: creating a non-partisan space for young leaders from different political parties and sectors; connecting research and empirical evidence with policy discussions; facilitating regular dialogue on emerging development issues and reform priorities; and contributing to more evidence-based policy thinking among future lawmakers and decision-makers.

Under the proposed modus operandi, the forum would bring together participants aged 40 years or below and would be convened at least once every three months at the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS). Each meeting would focus on a specific thematic agenda, such as economic reform, education, health, climate change, or digital transformation. Prior to each discussion, IIDS would provide relevant policy briefs, data, and analytical inputs to support evidence-based deliberation. Following each meeting, policy notes or discussion summaries could be prepared and shared with relevant policymakers where appropriate.

Ms. Thapa outlined the proposed Code of Conduct for the forum. The guiding principles emphasized placing national interest above party interest, grounding discussions in research, evidence, and verified facts, and maintaining mutual respect and constructive engagement among participants. It was further proposed that the forum remain independent of political, commercial, and donor influence while preserving IIDS's intellectual autonomy. Discussions would also be protected from unnecessary politicization or sensationalization.

Regarding the proposed governance structure, the forum would consist of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Members, and a General Secretary, with representation from young political leaders, the private sector, and IIDS. IIDS would serve as the Secretariat and would be responsible for coordinating meetings, providing research support, and ensuring the continuity of the forum.

The presentation then provided an overview of the demographic and educational profile of Nepal's current House of Representatives,

particularly the 165 directly elected (FPTP) members. The analysis showed an average age of approximately 45 years, with men comprising around 92 percent of FPTP members. The presentation highlighted the comparatively younger profile of many representatives elected from the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), pointing to potential signs of generational change within Nepal's political landscape.

The age and gender analysis further highlighted the limited representation of women among FPTP representatives. Of the 165 directly elected members, only 13 are women, underscoring the continuing challenge of achieving greater gender representation in the electoral system. The presentation also noted that the youngest FPTP representative was 25 years old, while the oldest was 71 years old, illustrating a considerable age range among members of the House.

The educational profile of the representatives was also discussed. Approximately one-third of the MPs hold Master's degrees or MBAs, while around 20 percent hold Bachelor's degrees. A smaller number have PhD qualifications. At the same time, educational information for approximately 24 percent of MPs was not publicly documented, highlighting gaps in publicly available information on representatives' backgrounds.

The presentation subsequently discussed Nepal's Proportional Representation (PR) system, which comprises 110 seats in the House of Representatives. The system is designed to promote inclusive representation, including a constitutional requirement for at least 33 percent women's representation. It also provides representation for historically underrepresented communities, including Dalit, Janajati, Madhesi, Muslim, and other groups.

The provincial and demographic analysis further showed that 54 of the 165 FPTP members are below the age of 40. The presentation also noted that a significant proportion of RSP representatives are first-time parliamentarians, which was presented as another indication of a potential generational shift in Nepalese politics.

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The presentation concluded that while youth participation in Nepal's political landscape appears to be increasing, participation alone is not sufficient to ensure meaningful political change. Continuous dialogue, evidence-based policymaking, and cross-party collaboration are equally important for strengthening the quality of democratic and policy processes.

In this context, YUWA Niti Sambad was presented as a potential platform through which young political leaders could engage in constructive discussions on national issues, draw on research and evidence, and contribute to more informed and effective policymaking in Nepal.

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Next Nepal Under the New Normal

Dr. Biswash Gauchan

Executive Chair, IIDS

Dr. Biswash Gauchan emphasized the importance of accountability and responsiveness in policymaking, particularly in relation to the participation of elected representatives and cross-sector stakeholders. It was noted that IIDS had been preparing for the dialogue over an extended period, building on its white paper and development-strategy work and engaging with the Ministry of Finance, including through budget discussions held in May.

The dialogue was intended to provide a platform for Members of Parliament and other stakeholders to engage with evidence, policy proposals, and issues requiring public accountability. The limited participation of relevant political representatives was identified as a broader institutional concern, as meaningful accountability requires sustained responsiveness from those entrusted with public decision-making.

Nepal's current economic condition was characterized as one of secular stagnation, with persistent structural constraints identified as more significant than any single economic shock. Three interconnected frameworks were presented: premature welfarism, premature financialization and land monetization, and the 3V trap of vanity policies, vanity plans, and vanity projects. These were presented as mutually reinforcing structural weaknesses that have contributed to low productivity and limited economic transformation. A broader structural cycle was also identified in which employment opportunities are increasingly externalized; returns are funneled into relatively unproductive land and real estate, and consumption remains heavily dependent on imports. These patterns were associated with premature depopulation through outmigration and the risk of Nepal losing its demographic dividend before achieving higher levels of income and productivity.

The scale of this structural underperformance was reflected in the observation that Nepal's nominal economic output is approximately 26 percent below its projected trajectory, alongside a fourth consecutive year of economic slowdown. This gap was associated with a "complacency trap," in which economic stability has been supported by remittances and consumption without being matched by sufficient gains in domestic productivity, investment, and productive capacity. A broader transition from state inefficiency toward market inefficiency was also identified, with resource misallocation increasingly occurring through financial and land markets. The persistence of these patterns was presented as a constraint on the development of a more productive and competitive economy.

“Premature welfarism was identified as one of the key structural concerns. It was argued that scarce public resources are being allocated to unconditional social-security allowances, particularly senior-citizen allowances, at a stage of development where greater priority may need to be given to human capital formation and productive investment. Such allocations were viewed as potentially reducing the resources available for skills development, vocational training, youth development, and support for farmers.”

Premature financialization and land monetization were identified as a second concern, with rapid credit expansion being directed disproportionately toward real estate and land speculation rather than productive enterprise. As a result, land prices have been driven upward, access to capital for emerging entrepreneurs has been constrained, and household wealth has increasingly been represented through assets rather than income-generating productive activities.

Public resources were described as directed toward highly visible and politically attractive initiatives rather than toward investments capable of generating sustained productivity gains. Although such initiatives may produce immediate visibility, their contribution to long-term structural transformation may remain limited. Greater priority was therefore emphasized for investments in human capital, institutional capacity, digital governance, productivity-enhancing reforms, and other areas whose returns accumulate over time. This was also presented as a broader challenge of aligning short-term political incentives with long-term economic priorities, particularly where less visible institutional and productivity reforms are essential for sustained development.

Dr. Gauchan used the concept of “**Nepalbaad**” which grounded in Nepal’s own economic conditions, productive capacity, and development stage rather than in imported policy models or comparisons with economies at substantially different levels of development. Greater emphasis was placed on benchmarking Nepal against genuinely comparable economies and on developing policies suited to its specific structural circumstances. Within this framework, productivity, productive investment, human capital, institutional capacity, and evidence-based policymaking were identified as central priorities. IIDS was also positioned as an independent intellectual resource whose institutional role is to challenge prevailing assumptions, question politically convenient narratives, and contribute evidence to public policy discussions.

Role of Youth in Nepal's Transformation

The keynote gave way to a wide-ranging panel moderated by Shreesh Tripathi, Research Assistant at IIDS, bringing together Hon. Sushil Khadka (Member of Parliament from Baglung-2), Prachi Agrawal (Board Member, Confederation of Nepalese Industries), Kritee Mahato (Director, Nepal Medicit), and Gopal Nepali (Senior Researcher, Samata Foundation). The conversation moved across five connected themes: legislative delivery, entrepreneurship, equity, diaspora, and healthcare.



From left to right: Shreesh Tripathi (Moderator; Research Assistant, IIDS), Kritee Mahato (Director, Nepal Medicit), Gopal Nepali (Senior Researcher, Samata Foundation), Prachi Agrawal (Board Member, Confederation of Nepalese Industries), and Hon. Sushil Khadka (Member of Parliament from Baglung-2).





MODERATOR

Mr. Shreesh Tripathi

Research Assistant, IIDS

The panel discussion examined the structural challenges facing Nepal's economy and the changes needed to support sustained economic transformation over the next five years. Panelists discussed the country's growth model, investment and entrepreneurship, inclusion, and the role of institutions. The panel also asked what youth can learn from the experiences of the panelists and how they can contribute to economic and structural change themselves.

Guiding Questions:

1. Has welfare and social security become the “third rail” of Nepali politics? If reform is deemed necessary, is the government prepared to accept the political risks associated with pursuing it?
2. Is Nepal's entrepreneurial environment encouraging the preservation of existing wealth more than the creation of new value? If so, what are the main factors contributing to this tendency?
3. In your view, is Nepal's greater challenge the creation of more opportunities, or the rebuilding of trust that those opportunities will be made fairly accessible to everyone? How can both be achieved?
4. For years, Nepal has viewed its diaspora primarily through the lens of remittances. Indeed, remittances account for nearly one-third of Nepal's GDP. However, this approach appears to be changing, particularly with the growing discussion around the economic and political rights of the diaspora.
5. After entering Parliament for the first time, how have you come to understand the gap between having the intention to bring about change and the process of translating that intention into meaningful reforms? And, within the existing system, where can a leader have the greatest impact in advancing reform?
6. What should young entrepreneurs in Nepal think and do differently to accelerate the country's economic transformation? And how can entrepreneurship and creative disruption be leveraged to bring about truly transformative change?
7. What should Nepal do differently to create a truly equal opportunity environment—a level playing field—for communities that have historically been deprived of opportunities?
8. Are members of the Nepali diaspora confident enough to invest in Nepal? And, equally importantly, is Nepal prepared—with the right policies, institutions, and investment climate—to welcome them as investors rather than simply as remittance senders?

Role of Youth in Nepal's Transformation

PANELIST

Hon. Sushil Khadka
Member of Parliament



Nepal's social safety nets were characterized as having expanded into "premature welfarism" before sufficient economic capacity had been developed to sustain unconditional transfers. A transition toward Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs), drawing on models implemented in Latin America, including Mexico, was proposed, with financial support being linked to measurable outcomes such as school attendance and children's health checkups.

Under such an approach, the misuse of welfare resources could be reduced, while public expenditure could be redirected toward productive economic activities and long-term human capital development. Welfare programs were therefore considered more effective when they were designed not only to provide immediate relief but also to generate measurable social and economic outcomes.

“ A clear distinction between legislative and executive responsibilities was considered essential. MPs are constitutionally entrusted primarily with legislative and oversight functions rather than executive authority, while public expectations are often shaped by an overlap between these institutional roles. ”

Greater public understanding of constitutional mandates was therefore considered necessary to strengthen democratic accountability and allow legislators to focus on policymaking, oversight, and long-term national priorities. Elected representatives were also viewed as public assets whose responsibilities should be directed toward broader national interests rather than individual service delivery.

Role of Youth in Nepal's Transformation



PANELIST

Ms. Prachi Agrawal

Board Member, CNI

Early-stage startup incentives and loans alone were considered insufficient to support long-term business growth. A 10-year cycle of patient capital, accompanied by regulatory stability, institutional support, and predictable financial market guidelines, was identified as necessary for sustained enterprise development. Without such a support system, high failure rates could be experienced despite strong initial interest among young entrepreneurs.

A stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem was therefore considered necessary, with mentorship, business incubation, market linkages, and technical assistance being provided throughout the business growth cycle. Streamlined regulatory procedures, improved access to finance, and stronger public-private coordination were identified as necessary for enabling startups to scale sustainably rather than merely survive. A stable policy environment was further considered essential for building investor confidence, encouraging innovation, and supporting long-term enterprise development.

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Greater attention was recommended to the development of distinctive businesses rather than the replication of saturated business models from larger economies. Nepal's comparative advantages were identified in areas such as wellness tourism, medical services, religious and cultural tourism, and high-value niche exports. The development of globally recognized “Made in Nepal” brands was encouraged through greater emphasis on authenticity, quality, and sustainability. Policy support was therefore recommended for innovation in indigenous products, value addition, market diversification, and stronger branding, enabling Nepali enterprises to compete through uniqueness and quality rather than scale alone.

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Role of Youth in Nepal's Transformation

PANELIST

Mr. Gopal Nepali

Senior Researcher, Samata Foundation



Merit and competency cannot be understood separately from Nepal's historical and structural inequalities. Existing definitions of merit, if left unexamined, can reproduce prejudices embedded in social and institutional structures. Unequal conditions created over time have affected the ability of different communities to access education, employment opportunities, and public resources.

Therefore, a genuinely merit-based system requires inclusive institutions and equitable access to opportunities so that individuals are not assessed solely on the basis of outcomes shaped by unequal starting conditions. State governance should also be directed toward a 100 percent standard of implementation rather than partial efforts. Constructive criticism and frustration expressed by young people should be recognized as necessary inputs for institutional reform rather than being treated simply as negativity.

“*Meaningful inclusion requires systemic recognition and targeted policy measures, particularly for historically marginalized communities such as the Dalit community. Awareness campaigns alone are insufficient without institutional mechanisms addressing political representation, social rights, caste-based discrimination, and equitable allocation of economic resources.*”

Greater emphasis should therefore be placed on equity rather than equality, since identical treatment does not necessarily produce fair outcomes when starting conditions are unequal. Communities and categories of youth facing structural disadvantages should be clearly identified, and appropriate interventions should be developed according to their specific circumstances. Through targeted and inclusive policies, access to opportunities can be made more equitable, while the participation of historically excluded communities in Nepal's development can be strengthened.

Role of Youth in Nepal's Transformation



PANELIST

Ms. Kritee Mahato

Member, NRNA

Director, Nepal Medicit

Quality domestic healthcare was identified as one mechanism for reducing capital outflows and strengthening Nepal's investment environment. Institutions such as Nepal Medicit have been established to provide international-standard healthcare domestically, thereby reducing foreign exchange expenditures associated with medical treatment abroad.

Nepal's natural, ecological, and geographical advantages were also identified as providing significant potential for biomedical and wellness tourism. However, the realization of this potential would require coordinated policy and infrastructure development across healthcare providers, academic institutions, and tourism authorities rather than reliance on individual institutions. A more predictable investment environment, supported by stronger institutional coordination and enabling policies, would be necessary for diaspora capital to be directed toward productive domestic investment.

Their expertise should be incorporated through sustained institutional arrangements rather than being limited to occasional visits or informal contributions. Through such mechanisms, Nepal's global pool of professional knowledge could be more effectively utilized to strengthen domestic healthcare capacity, support knowledge transfer, and contribute to the development of biomedical and wellness tourism.

“*Stronger institutional mechanisms should be established to integrate diaspora expertise into Nepal's domestic development processes. Clear policy frameworks should be developed to connect diaspora doctors, researchers, and health managers with public boards, research institutions, and teaching hospitals.*”

Closing Remarks

Ms. Aakriti Kafle

Jr. Research Analyst, IIDS



The closing remarks were delivered by Ms. Aariti Kafle, who extended her sincere gratitude to all the distinguished guests, speakers, panelists, youth leaders, private sector representatives, academics, civil society representatives, and participants who attended the first edition of YUWA Niti Sambad.

Ms. Kafle reflected on the vision behind YUWA Niti Sambad, highlighting it as a platform for evidence-based policy dialogue that seeks to place national interest at the centre of discussions beyond political differences. She noted that the keynote address by Dr. Biswash Gauchan had provided valuable perspectives on both the challenges and opportunities currently facing Nepal.

She further highlighted that the panel discussion had brought attention to the role of young people not only as future leaders but also as present-day policy actors and change-makers. According to Ms. Kafle, the discussion demonstrated the importance of creating spaces where young people can actively engage with policy issues and contribute their perspectives to national debates.

“*Ms. Kafle emphasized that Nepal's transformation cannot be achieved through slogans alone, but requires dialogue, evidence, collaboration, and informed policymaking. She explained that this principle lies at the heart of YUWA Niti Sambad and its aim to encourage constructive and meaningful policy conversations among young people.*”

She also stated that YUWA Niti Sambad is envisioned as a continuing platform rather than a one-time event. The initiative seeks to bring together young people from different political backgrounds, sectors, and experiences to engage in meaningful dialogue on issues of national importance. Ms. Kafle expressed hope that the conversations initiated during the event would not remain confined to the venue but would contribute to future policy debates, decision-making processes, and Nepal's broader development journey.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Kafle thanked all the speakers, panelists, participants, and the team working behind the scenes for their time, insights, and contributions to making the event possible. She emphasized that their willingness to participate in constructive dialogue was what made the platform meaningful.

Expressing her hope that the first edition of YUWA Niti Sambad would serve as the beginning of continued conversations on Nepal's policy and development priorities and looked forward to welcoming participants in future editions of the platform.

Conclusion

The inaugural edition of YUWA Niti Sambad marked a transition from dialogue toward an ongoing working process. The keynote address offered a structural diagnosis of Nepal's economic condition, articulated through the concepts of the Premature Tetrad, the 3V Trap, and Nepalbaad as an alternative development path. The panel discussion that followed applied this diagnosis across sectors, including Parliament, industry, equity, NRNA and healthcare, moderated by researchers themselves under the age of 40.

The forum was structured around specific, clearly identified gaps: between policy intent and ground-level delivery, and between diaspora goodwill and diaspora investment. These gaps remained unresolved at the close of the session; however, they were articulated openly and directly by the country's Members of Parliament, industry leaders, and researchers, establishing a shared basis for continued engagement. Throughout the day, the presence of parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, researchers, and clinicians under the age of 40 reinforced the forum's core premise, that young people in Nepal are already active policy actors rather than leaders-in-waiting.

IIDS has indicated its intention to convene YUWA Niti Sambad on a recurring basis, sustaining a non-partisan platform through which young leaders across political affiliations and sectors can engage with evidence and contribute to policy accountability. In doing so, the initiative seeks to connect research with reform as part of Nepal's broader development trajectory toward Vision 2100.



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